PRESENTATION SKILLS

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- Presentation is a speech that is usually given in a formal setup - business, technical, professional or scientific environment. Something set forth to an audience for the attention of the mind. An effective presentation creates a change in the audience; they become more informed or gain a better understanding of a particular subject. A good presentation is a kind of communication between the speaker and the audience.

- Presentations are an important way of communicating ideas and information to a group. Presentation carries the speaker's personality better and allows immediate interaction between all participants.

Why Presentation?

- To teach/train
- To gather opinions
- To publicize an idea
- To share findings of research
- To highlight a problem (and to seek a solution)
- To pass on information
- To entertain
- To motivate

Presentation Formats

- Providing Information
- Teaching a skill
- Reporting Progress
- Selling a product, Service or Strategy
- Obtaining a Decision
- Solving a Problem

In order to communicate with your audience, you need to consider the following points:

1. **Content**: It contains information that people need. The presenter should assess how much information the audience can absorb.

2. **Structure**: It has a logical beginning, middle and end. It must be sequenced and paced so that the audience can understand it. The presenter must be careful not to lose the audience when wandering from the main point of the presentation.

An Outline for Presentations:

Introduction

- What? Overview of the presentation
- Why? Purpose of the presentation (why the subject is important)
- How? How will you deliver your presentation, what are the expectations of the audience from it?
- Who? If more than one person is presenting, provide introductions and indicate roles (don't expect audience to memorize it)

Body

- The following list suggests alternative formats for presenting information: multiple formats can be used within the presentation:
- Rhetorical – questions & answers
- Logical progression – indicate steps e.g. A then B then C
- Time series – order information from beginning to end, earlier to later etc.
- Compare and contrast – use the same structure to compare different events individuals or situations
- Problems and solutions – don't present problems without working toward some recommended solutions
- Simple to complex – use successive building blocks to communicate complex process or concepts
- Deductive reasoning –moving from general principles or values to specific applications or examples
- Inductive reasoning – using specific applications/examples to reach general principles or conclusions

3. Conclusion

- Review, highlight and emphasize key points, benefits and recommendations.

- Draw conclusions – What are we? What does all of this mean? What's the next step?

Packaging

- It must be well prepared. Writing can be re-read and portions skipped over, but with a presentation, the audience is at the mercy of the presenter.

- Tell the audience what you are going to tell them;

- Tell them; and

- Tell them what you have told them.

A Checklist for Presentation

- You owe your audience, so creating an effective presentation takes planning and practice. Following are the tips to deliver an effective presentation:

1. Start preparing early: don't wait until the last few days to prepare

- Don't wait for the last moment
- Practice your entire presentation
- Try to practice it before a group of colleagues or friends

2. Think about your audience

- Who are they and why are they gathered?
- What are their interests?
- What do they know? What do they want to know? What is worth their time?

3. As an audience member, think about these questions:

- Why should I pay attention to the presenter? And when can I think about more interesting things?
- Why should I care about these issues?
- I agree with the significance of the topic, but how is the presenter justifying his ideas?
- Now that I am convinced, what does the presenter want from me?

4. Be clear about your purpose

- Are you informing or persuading?
- Tell them what you are going to do, tell them what you told them
- What do you want the audience to know, feel or believe afterwards?

5. Use an effective introduction

- Orient the audience, explain why it's important and set the tone
- Establish a relationship between the speaker and the audience, establish credibility
- Avoid weak introduction such as apologizes, jokes, rhetorical questions

6. Organize your presentation clearly and simply

- Prioritize topics and allocate time accordingly
- Stick to only 3 5 points
- Have a well thought out pattern (examples are problem/solution, chronological, causes and effect, topical); use transitions to move smoothly from one point to the next.

7. Use supporting materials to flesh out main points

- Use examples, statistics, expert opinion etc.

8. Compose for the ears, not for the eyes

- Use simple words, simple sentences, markers, repetition, images, personal, language etc.

9. Create an effective conclusion

- Summarize, set final image, provide closure; don't trail off, don't use trite phrases

- Don't just present data or summarized results and leave audience to draw its own conclusions

- You have had much more time to work with your information than your audience; share your insight and understanding and tell them what you have concluded from your work

10. Sound spontaneous, conversational, and enthusiastic

- Use key phrases in your notes, so you don't have to read, use the overhead instead of notes
- Vary volume, don't be afraid of silence, and don't use fillers like "ummm….Aahmm" Practice, practice and practice

11. Use body language effectively

- Relaxed gestures, eye contact, don't play with a pen or pointer
- Don't block visual aids

12. Use visual aids to enhance the message

- Use visual aids to reinforce and clarify, not overwhelm
- Keep visual aids uncluttered, use titles to guide the audience

13. Analyze the environment

- Note the size of the room, placement of chairs, time of day, temperature, distractions
- Check audio visual equipment ahead of time

Making the Presentation Delivery

Speak clearly. Don't shout or whisper - judge the acoustics of the room.

- Don't rush, or talk deliberately slowly. Be natural - although not conversational.
- Deliberately pause at key points - this has the effect of emphasizing the importance of a particular point you are making.
- Avoid jokes - always disastrous unless you are a natural expert.
- To make the presentation interesting, change your delivery, but not too obviously. e.g.: speed, pitch of voice.

- Use your hands to emphasize points but don't indulge in too much hand waving.
- People can, over a period of time, envelop irritating habits. Ask colleagues occasionally what they think of your style.

- Look at the audience as much as possible, but don't fix on one individual – it can be intimidating. Pitch our presentation towards the back of the audience, especially in larger rooms.
- Don't face the display screen behind you and talk to it. Other annoying habits include: Standing in a position where you obscure the screen. In fact, positively check for anyone in the audience who may be disadvantaged and try to accommodate them.

Presentation Skills - Some Practice Tips:

- Practicing these exercises will make presentation more natural.

- **Posture --** Practice standing in the correct posture [feet, knees, hips, shoulders all in a straight line with your arms at your sides] while standing on lifts, standing in queues, waiting at the cash machine, on a coffee break, etc.

- **Movement --** Practice movement on your feet at home. Cut faces out of magazines and tape or pin them to chairs and sofas. Speaking to one "person" at a time, look first, walk over and stand still for 3 or 4 sentences while speaking, then look at someone else, and repeat the process.

- **Gestures --** Start practicing the use of gestures for description and/or emphasis by first becoming more aware of your own natural gestures. Do you gesture while on telephone? Do you gesture while talking to a friend, colleague, or family member? By increasing your awareness of what you do with your arms and hands in every day conversations, you will be able to transfer these gestures into all speaking situations.

Facial Animation -- Appropriate facial expressions usually coincide with gestures.

- **Facial Animation** -- Appropriate facial expressions usually coincide with gestures. If you tend to look overly serious during presentations, using more gestures will help liven up things. Also practice making a variety of facial gestures while speaking in a mirror or driving in the car.

- **Voice** - For Volume and Variety: For sufficient volume, become more aware of breathing deeply from your diaphragm. Lie on the floor with a book placed just above your belt or waist. Yawn several times. This is what breathing from the diaphragm should feel like. Breathe in slowly to the count of 10 watching your stomach expand and then exhale slowly expelling all the air. For vocal variety practice, try reading children's books aloud. Your voice will naturally animate with the story. Record your voice and listen to it resonate in your head for higher vocal tones, in your throat for the midrange and deep in your chest for lower vocal tones. Using more gestures will also help to naturally animate your voice.

- **Pause and Pace** -- To help eliminate clutter words and use the right, controlled pace, try playing back your voice mail messages before sending them to the recipient and evaluate yourself. Listen for short sentences that end without clutter and "over-connectors" such as: and, but, and so, and rate your pace.

- **Eye Contact** -- Place three to four small Post-It Notes randomly around your workspace. These will be your "eye targets." Whenever you're on the phone, speak one short sentence while looking at the first Post-It Note. After finishing the sentence, pause. Then move on to the next Post-it Note and repeat. This will help you to maintain eye contact with one person at a time while completing a thought or sentence, and eliminate clutter words.

Dos and Don'ts of Presentation

Dos

- Lots of background research. Even if the information is not used in the presentation, it is useful to have as much knowledge as possible for the discussion and audience questions. It will assist your confidence too.

- Be organized - prepare in plenty of time.

- Structure your presentation.

- Focus on the question set.

- Obtain material from a wide range of sources.

- Practice your presentation.

- Use note cards.

- Speak clearly.

Don'ts

- Leave research and preparation until the last minute.
- Rely on one source of information.
- Make it up.
- Just hope that it will come together on the day without preparation and practice.
- Have no notes to rely on if you get stuck.
- Worry too much it's not as bad as it seems.
- Mumble.
- Read from script.
- Rush the presentation by speaking too fast.
- Make eye contact with your audience.

Research indicates that we tend to base our judgment of other people on three main characteristics:

- Verbal content: 7%
- Vocal Interests: 38%
- Body Language: 55%
- This shows that more than 90% of your public image depends of how you look and sound than the content that you deliver.
- There is no mystery about making a good presentation
- It is all about finding out how to do it right.
- It is a skill, and like any other skill it can be learnt.
- It is a skill, which can be mastered with little time and effort.
- The most brilliant speech will ultimately depend for its success on presentation style of the speaker.